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KING FIALAR



J. L. Runborg.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

KING FIALAR

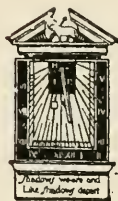
A POEM IN FIVE SONGS

BY

JOHAN LUDVIG RUNEBERG

TRANSLATED BY

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TO
MY FRIENDS
MR. AND MRS. JOHN MORGAN RICHARDS
STEEPHILL CASTLE, ISLE OF WIGHT
I DEDICATE THIS WORK
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE VERY SINCERE INTEREST
THEY HAVE BEEN GOOD ENOUGH TO TAKE IN
ITS PUBLICATION

EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON,

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PREFACE

THE name of the great Finnish poet, Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804-78), though less known in this country than on the continent of Europe, is not so unfamiliar to English readers as the poet's own countrymen complain of. In company with the late Prof. E. W. Palmer, I brought out in 1878 a translation of his collected lyrical poems, idylls and epigrams, prefaced by a short sketch of his life¹ and a brief review of his principal works.

This was supplemented by a highly appreciative account of Runeberg's poetical merits from the pen of Mr. (now Sir) Edmund Gosse, in his *Studies in the Literatures of Northern Europe* (1879), where he goes so far as to assert that Runeberg "is the greatest poet that ever used the Swedish language"; an assertion that correctly expresses the views even of most Swedes on the subject.

Of late years some of Runeberg's lesser epic poems have been done into English both in this country and in America, such as the wonderfully touching story of *Nadeschda* and the tragic narrative of the *Grave in Perrho*, etc.

¹ One statement I should like to correct here. On the authority of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* I said that Runeberg's wife, Fredrika Charlotta Tengström, was the daughter of Archbishop (Jacob) Tengström (so too the last edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica*), whereas her father was Karl Fredrik Tengström, a government accountant and near relative of the Archbishop.

Of all Runeberg's creations in poetical art, the epic of *King Fialar* is acknowledged to be the stateliest as to outfit, the loftiest as to aim, and in substance the most solid. Any one tolerably familiar with his works will readily endorse Sir Edmund's appreciation of it—

“*Kung Fialar*, in fact, marks the very apex of his powers. Runeberg never exceeded this tragic work in the admirable later creations of his brain. It has an audacity, an originality that raises it to the first order of lyric writing.”

King Fialar occupies the peculiar position among the poetical productions of Runeberg that it is the only one indicating indebtedness for inspiration to Ossianic sources. A certain interest, literary and bibliographical, attaches to the fact which may, not improbably, be accounted for in the following manner.

In the year 1842 the able Gaelic scholar, Nils Arfwidsson, a Swede, brought out the first volume of his translation into Swedish of the poems of Ossian, accompanied by a critical dissertation, which even still remains a standard contribution to the Macphersonian controversy. The second and last volume of the work appeared in 1846. Such was the interest evinced in the book in Sweden that it was awarded the “Karl Johan prize” by the Swedish Academy of Letters. The translation preserved the metres of the original; it was couched in a singularly refined and graceful language, and soon became widely known on both sides of the Bothnian Gulf. It is probable enough that Runeberg might have

made acquaintance with Ossian before this Swedish translation appeared; but no translator of the Gaelic work could have afforded him at that time anything like so direct and sure an introduction to the spirit of Ossianic poetry as did Arfwidsson. And the probability that his work was really the primary cause of Runeberg's conceiving the grand idea of *King Fialar* is strengthened by the facts that *Fialar* appeared first in 1844, and that Runeberg's spellings of certain proper names—*Finjal* for *Fingal*, *Hidjallan* for *Hidallan*, *Shelma* for *Selma*—are all peculiar to, and therefore copied from, Arfwidsson.

In Ossianic poetry frequent allusions occur to hostile intercourse between the inhabitants of Lochlin or Scandinavia and those of Caledonia. In these allusions the mighty spirit and form of *Lodin*¹ (*Loduin*, or *Cru-Loduin*), *i. e.* *Odin*, looms large, and Scandinavian kings and warriors are prominently dealt with. These facts left Runeberg at liberty to create international relations between the Scandinavian East and the Celtic West at an undefined post-Ossianic period, which, however, he obviously relegates to a time long anterior to the historic Viking age of the North.

The consequence of this conception was that the scenes of the drama of *Fialar* must be located partly within *Fingal's* ancient realm of *Morven* in the

¹ "Lodin's (= *Odin's*) tempest" (III, xxv) is meant to signify "mighty warrior"; it is not a quite correct "kenning," but suits better than "*Hlodyn's* (the *Earth's*) storm" that some interpreters suggest. According to the ancient kenning-makers "*Odin's* tempest" = "a-battle."

western Highlands of Scotland; partly within the Scandinavian dominion of the "King of Gothfolk," presumably West-Gothland (Vest-Götaland) in Sweden. As a matter of course the actors within the Scandinavian environment bear old Scandinavian names such as are commonly met with in the old sagas, while those of the actors within the Celtic environment are all drawn from the Ossianic poems. The most interesting of these is that of the ocean-foundling, the heroine Oihonna (Gaelic Oighthonna, from oigh=maiden, and tonna=wave). But nothing beyond the mere names is borrowed; the characters themselves, their relationships, actions, ideas and language are all of Runeberg's own creation.

The story of Fialar is invented in order to bring home to the reader the dogma that *the fixed purpose of the calmly victorious Gods is to lead humanity—by chastisement if rebellious—through a perfectly natural course of cause and effect into eternal "at-one-ment" with Themselves.*¹

This idea, that the ultimate goal of life is "at-one-ment" with the Divine Being, was with Runeberg an article of faith. In an essay entitled "Ramido Marinisco" (1837) he says: "There is not a being but must yearn for atonement, on the simple ground that such a yearning is the innermost nature of essentiality."

In one of his "Philosophical Reflections" he gives utterance to a sentiment which may be regarded as the centre point of the conception of the epic of

¹ Cf. *Samlade skrifter*, ii, 495 ff. Stockholm, 1903.

Fialar: "I cannot conceive of discord in life as anything real in itself. Certainly I know that interests by the thousand must succumb every hour to some higher interest; but it is just this higher interest that turns the whole into a state of harmony (proportion), into something in itself beautiful and ordered. Therefore when I write poetry, I do it through a natural instinct in harmony with this conception of life; and I scorn everything in which I do not discern atonement and a merciful order. The poet should create after the fashion of God, the beauty of whose work is enhanced even by the abyss itself."¹

The epic of *King Fialar* is a clear illustration of the principles here enunciated. Fialar is a great personality, but suffering from the worst affliction to which a human being can be subject—the malady of rebellious *unbelief*. He belongs to that category of Vikings who, from long-continued experience of victory in war, came to abandon all faith save that in their "own might and main." His aspirations are as hyperbolic as the language by which he describes them is bombastic; he is a terribly self-willed tyrant, but well meaning, and endowed with noble qualities of mind and heart. Surfeited with military glory and accumulation of worldly power, he conceives the idea of making peace the ruling principle of his reign. He embraces this inspiration with all the enthusiasm of his indomitable will. At the sacred midnight hour of Yule-eve, the hour of vows, he announces his new policy to the revelling multitude of his men-at-arms.

¹ Cf. *Efterlemnade skrifter*, i, 242.

He delivers the customary oath of the vow *on his own will*, neglecting altogether the time-honoured invocation to the Gods.¹ Considering that Fialar was the *pontifex maximus* of his people, his conduct on this occasion amounted to *crimen laesae majestatis divinae*.

The gods had their answer ready. By the seer Dargar they had conveyed to Fialar the message that, in consequence of his presumptuous invasion of their own domain, the absolute rule of the empire of life, he must be punished. For he shall see the day when the calamity falls upon his race that his only son (Hialmar) embraces as bride his only sister (Gerda). *Tantaene animis coelestibus irae!*

Fialar, who does not deny the existence of the Gods, but merely their power to defeat his "indomitable will," resolves immediately on foiling them by destroying the life of one of his children, a resolve which the humanity of his heart, when the moment comes, renders him unfit to execute himself. In his distraction, however, he leaves the deed—the destruction of the life of his daughter—to be vicariously performed by his cool-headed old counsellor, Siolf, on the specious dynastic ground that Hialmar is destined to be the guardian of the realm when infirmities shall render Fialar unfit for the duty. So Fialar's daughter is cast into the sea, and the situation, in Fialar's opinion, is saved.

¹ The invocation: "So help me Frey and Niord and the Almighty God (= Thor)." Runeberg does not refer to this formulary itself; but it is obvious from the message that Fialar received by Dargar from the Gods, I, xxxii ff., and from Siolf's rebuke of Fialar in Song V, xiv f., that he had it in his mind.

The sacredness of the hour protects the seer from violent treatment by the offended tyrant; but Dargar has to promise to meet Fialar again, to receive his due for his "lying prophecy" before the king's hand lies benumbed on his sword. Dargar, it should be noticed, is a mixture of a human being and a sprite ("blendingr").

Over Vidar's Rock, a headland in the immediate proximity to Fialar's kingly burg, the child was precipitated into a storm-tossed sea. That same night the outlawed pirate Darg, a fair game, had sought a "shelter dread" under this very precipice. The shelter was "dread" not only on account of the stress of the weather, but equally, or even more so, by reason of its close neighbourhood to that terror of evil-doers, the ever-watchful Fialar. Darg's situation demanded a heedful night-watch being kept on board. And by this situation the salvation of Gerda's life, as afterwards told by the pirate himself to King Morannal, becomes an occurrence that might happen quite naturally without any crude or capricious intervention by fate or miracle-working Providence.

As told in the Fourth Song of the poem, Darg's foundling passes under the fostering care of Morannal, King of Morven; at the castle of Selma she grows up to woman's estate, under the name of Oihonna = Maiden of the Waves (see above), dearly beloved by her blind foster-father. Bewitchingly beautiful, an enthusiastic huntress, proud, self-willed, and passionately devoted to heroic minstrelsy, ancient as well as contemporary, she is wooed by the desperately love-stricken three sons of Morannal, each of

whom in turn she refuses her hand. To the last of them, Clesamor, however, she confesses to being in love with a youth whom she has never seen in the flesh, only in dreams, and who, without a word of warning, will one day swoop suddenly upon the astonished realm of Morven.

This youth of her dreams is the young Prince Hialmar, son of the mighty ruler in Lochlin, Fialar; the saga of the young prince, drawn from contemporary minstrelsy, Oihonna relates in the Third Song. According to that saga, this ever-victorious youthful Viking was the most ideal type of fearless courage, chivalrous modesty and filial obedience known to minstrelsy of any time.

Prince Hialmar, "faring about the world as fares the storm," between "lands smiling in the sun, and the winter's ice-encumbered homes," hears everywhere celebrated, "in song and saga lore," the beauty and the imperious qualities of Oihonna, "daughter" of Morannal, King of Morven. He learns with indignation how she rejects with lofty disdain one after another the high-born princes that sue for her hand. In Viking fashion he makes a vow to take the haughty maiden for his bride himself, and for that purpose makes war on the King of Morven, having no idea that he himself is already the chosen one of Oihonna's heart. He wins a hard-fought battle. The royal race of Morven is extinct. He takes as prize of his victory Oihonna, and marries her, in accordance with Viking law and custom, on foam-bemantled sea.

Soon after the marriage (Song V) the secret comes

to light that Oihonna is Hialmar's sister. She at once demands and obtains death at his hands, while he himself hurries home to his father to impart the news to him, and to take his own life with the same sword that had ended the life of Oihonna. To the accident of the marriage of the children of Fialar, utterly ignorant of their blood-relationship, there attaches not the faintest shadow of moral defect. On the contrary, their resolve not to endure life so disgraced, though without any fault of their own, shows in how pure an ethical atmosphere their breath of life was breathed.

At the disclosures of Hialmar's tragic story and by his death, the castles that Fialar's overweening vanity had so long been busy at building in the air crumbled into a heap of ruins. The power to "direct the course of life" was not his, after all; it was the prerogative of the immortal Gods. What he had regarded as the crowning victory of his life—the foiling of the purpose of the Gods—had resulted only in a crowning disaster for himself. He reflects. He repents. He wants only atonement with the Gods he has so persistently offended. And with a sigh, heaved from the depths of a sincerely contrite heart, he utters the cry of yearning: "To You I go!"

The purpose of the Gods is effected. A noble but misguided soul has been redeemed from the errors of its ways at a cost commensurate with its obduracy, which nothing less than a sacrifice of two dear and innocent lives would ever have overcome. Thus the immortal Gods, in their inscrutable wisdom, lead humanity, if need be, even by a punishment of in-

comprehensible severity, into an everlasting "at-one-ment" with Themselves.

Such is Runeberg's conception of the relation of Divine providence to the wayward will of man.

With regard to the English rendering of this poem I may be allowed a few remarks. For metrical arrangement the epic of *King Fialar* stands quite alone in poetry written in the Swedish or any other language I know. Every song is made up of stanzas, each of which consists of four lines without rhyme; each of the four lines has its own peculiar metre of Celtic or classical origin. Every stanza in each song follows with unvarying exactness the metrical scheme of the first. It is an impossible task to attempt reproducing these metres in readable English; ¹ even in readable Swedish they could only be presented by such a master as Runeberg. I therefore chose the English narrative metre of blank verse, as the *most suitable to the subject matter itself*, and as, on the whole, standing in a nearer rhythmical affinity to, at least, the longer-lined cantos, than any other metrical form I could think of.

As to the translation of this classical work, it has been my endeavour throughout to let it reflect faithfully the language and the thought of the author. The severe condensation which the metres adopted imposed upon him, in connection with the fact that the Swedish of Finland indulges in certain turns

¹ An attempt at the task has been made by a Finnish lady who is a competent English scholar, but it is, as it was foredoomed to be, not a success.

of speech which are foreign to the Swedish of Sweden, renders the task of translating *King Fialar* one that requires heed and caution. In illustration of this remark I may quote the verse-line (Song I, stanza LV): "As monument to her this must suffice," which is merely an attempt at giving some intelligible rendering of the lapidary expression of the original: "det är minne nog" = "that is 'memory,' or 'memorial,' or 'monument,' enough." In deference to Swedish friends whom I have consulted, Dr. Anna Paues of Newnham, Cambridge, Dr. Pålsson of Lund, Sweden, Mrs. Anna Dutt of Cambridge, to all of whom I am greatly beholden for much kind advice, I have translated "minne," as if it stood for "graf-minne," by "monument"; yet I am by no means satisfied that it hits off the sense the poet meant his words to convey.

Again, in Song II, LVIII, I have translated the line: "älskar strålen af swärdets brand," by: "delightest in the gleam of flaming swords," taking "brand" in its general sense of "flame," "fire." But "gleam" (beam) and "flame" seem too tautologous terms for such a master as Runeberg to make use of in describing the effect of the brandishing of a polished sword. But if "brand" should in Finland Swedish have the sense of "sword-blade," which, apparently, it has not in modern Swedish, though in Old Scandinavian and English it is common enough, I should say the line was incontestably Runebergian. In that case the translation would be: "Lovest the gleaming of the falchion's blade." But expressions of dubious sense in the original are really

extremely few, and are practically exhausted by these two examples.

Many friends of mine have given a sympathetic ear to my translation, with the result that my rigid adherence to the original, and close imitation of its simplicity, has had to undergo considerable modification in favour of more idiomatic phrasing, and diction more in harmony with the Ossianic dignity of the poem. Of friends who have thus lent me a helping hand towards this end I may mention Miss Bertha S. Phillpotts of Girton College, and Prof. G. W. Collingwood, who was good enough, after perusal of the poem, to send me copious suggestions, of which I have made a liberal use, and for which I tender him my cordial thanks. But especially I am gratefully beholden to my very kind friends and just critics, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Ainslie Hight, of Samer, France, under whose kind personal encouragement it was my privilege to apply a searching revision to the whole work.

Last, but by no means least, is the gratitude I owe to the venerable Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Mr. W. Aldis Wright, for having honoured my work with the following recommendation (dated Feb. 21, 1910)—

“Allowing for the way in which you have imposed restraints upon yourself in following the original so closely, you have produced a version which carries one along with it and gives the impression of overmastering fate.”

E. M.

KING FIALAR

SONG I

Author of happy ordered state, he shall
Behold a day when, stained with guilt, his race
Is quenched in shame, his only son embracing
As bride his sister to a fiery breast.

I

THERE sat majestic on his royal throne
The mighty-hearted Fialar, Gothfolk's king.
His glance, that joys of victories had brightened,
Gleamed young as yet beneath his silver hair.

II

Yule-tide was in; men feasted in his burg,
Midwinter's mead rose in the foam-topped horn,
A hundred torches blazed, a hundred warriors
And more were revelling in their king's abode.

III

Alf, Veseté with Kari and with Rafn,
Approved in summer-warfare, Ingul bold,
And Agnar and the slayer of berserks, Hadding,
Youths all as yet, though famed in minstrels' songs,

IV

Styr of the scars, and Sote with a shield
By twice twelve arrows smitten and smitten through,
Drank round their lord.—The names of all his
warriors,
Who can recall, or tell their deeds of fame?

V

Yet one let not the bard forget—not thee,
O Siolf, the year-encumbered slayer of hosts,
The only one of all the old-time heroes
Left to King Fialar in his sinking age.

VI

Thou stoodst beside him when within the veins
Of both was rushing young the stream of life;
Bidding the might of years and death defiance,
With him thy cooler blood thou still couldst shed.

VII

Give heed! The king now riseth to his feet,
His hand hath clasped the foaming horn around.
The lord desires to speak now, he is minded
To take his oath; this is the hour of vows.

VIII

“Up,” thus he speaks, “harken to me, ye men,
The old oak’s swelling summer-foliage, grown
Freshly around the hoary stem that tempests
Of war so many a time have raged against!

IX

“Which of your company was old enough
To chase the butterfly on flowery meads,
When, far away on Morven’s strand, my falchion
Bit wan Duncomar with a bloody tooth?

X

“Ships I had nine; with warriors out of each
Well nigh a hundred told I went ashore;
With twice that muster Morven faced me, gleaming
Proudly against the streak of dawning day.

XI

“Two, I and Siolf, were left upon the strand,
When in the western sky the evening cloud
Swam pale, and on the sword’s abundant harvest
The full-orbed moon cast down her glance of peace.

XII

“Such was the feat achieved by us in youth.
The cheek grew bearded, we grew into men,
And harried lands that winter never harried,
And fared still farther than the summer fares.

XIII

“I took a maiden then first when my locks
Were turning grey, but made the goodly one
My queen. A son she bore me and a daughter.
Both play with flowers still on their mother’s grave.

XIV

“I’ve had enough of mighty deeds and war.
Illustrious princes pay me dues, my name
Has tired the lips of bards, the harp possesses
No fresh tones more for further triumphs left.

xv

“ ’Tis now my will to take my rest at last,
My life’s tempestuous day is at its eve;
The winds blow softer; seas and lands subjected
Must learn the tidings of my evening’s calm! ”

xvi

So spake he. Siolf, the veteran, listening stood.
The bosom of the hoary warrior swelled
With indignation unrestrained, and darkness
Was spread in furrows o’er his lowering brow.

xvii

“ What! did my ear betray me? ” he exclaimed.
“ Was it King Fialar’s voice that sounded ‘ rest ’?
Has hunting tired the eagle out already?
Loves he the radiant realm of fame no more? ”

xviii

“ Still Erin boldly reareth up her head,
Though twice subdued she still defies thy sword;
The prowling Biarms make red with blood the oceans;
Wilt thou await them here on thine own shore? ”

XIX

“ The cairn alone affordeth us repose;
Above it none may rest, and least the weak.
The sports of life are sports for hardy players;
Woe for thy strength untimely broken, King! ”

XX

There gathered proudly, at the old man's word,
Round Fialar's lip a smile. He gave the horn
Unto the page again, and from the pillar
Bedecked with weapons calmly took his bow.

XXI

The bow-string cried aloud. A lightning flash
Shot through the hall. Vibrating rang a shield
Struck on the farthest wall, while deep behind it
The arrow quivered in the pine-wood's heart.

XXII

A shot like this, the warriors then agreed,
Had not been witnessed in the North before.
The king took calmly back the horn, and mighty
His voice was heard throughout the hall anew—

XXIII

“Peace,” he declared; “my will ’tis to preserve.
Hark, Gothfolk’s sons, unto your monarch’s oath!
Extended huts, and guarded groves, and acres
Of golden ears shall be my triumphs now.

XXIV

“Within my country, fenced about, shall grow
What sweet and soft was sown in human breast,
And weakness blossom safe, while strength, by sparing
The sword, shall but in mercy take delight.

XXV

“In my own will I heretofore believed,
In that same will I still believe; in war
It ruled the course of death, indomitable
It shall, in peace, direct the course of life.

XXVI

“Should violence rear a threatening arm, or vice
Go safe, should law be broken in my realm,
Or decent, hallowed order be dishonoured—
Let Fialar sink forgot and Fialar’s oath!”

XXVII

He paused. His voice was felt resounding still
Within the warriors' breasts. But to his lips
Himself the drinking-horn he lifted slowly,
And in a single draught he drank it out.

XXVIII

So now the king resumed his seat in peace.
And in there stepped a guest up to his throne;
His entry none had heeded, blank amazement
Followed his quiet, gloom-enshadowed gait.

XXIX

He looked, at first, a man of stooping guise,
An utter stranger, bowed by want and years;
But with each step his stature grew the taller,
And giant-like he stood before the king.

XXX

His cloak he opened, and with awe was seen
The soothsayer Dargar, Fate's interpreter,
Who with his spirit's vision had the power
To pierce the dim abyss of times to come.

XXXI

Though seen on northern fells these hundred years,
To happy people he but seldom showed;
And threat'ning dismal thunder from the distance
Feared whosoever heard his quiet voice.

XXXII

He spake: "O King, thine oath was great, yet one
Still greater Dargar heard, where silent he
Sat on a crag's top, in the still air, listening
To sounds descending from a night-cloud's fringe.

XXXIII

"He heard the words: 'King Fialar has forgot
That Gods dispense the lot of man, and proud
He trusts the laws of his own will, presuming
To sway the future with his power of dust.

XXXIV

"Yet shall his eye see, ere the barrow's night
Holds in her keep his fleeting greatness, how
Eternal powers will play with man's defiant
And scornful vows, of but a bubble's weight.

XXXV

“ ‘Author of happy ordered state, he shall
Behold a day when, stained with guilt, his race
Is quenched in shame, his only son embracing
As bride his sister to a fiery breast.’ ”

XXXVI

The hall was hushed; the eye beheld a sight
Such as is witnessed when a storm of hail
Has swept along, and calm, again returning,
Sinks chilly down upon a whitened land.

XXXVII

There, on his throne of lordship, pale of face,
Sat Fialar, with a hueless, quivering lip;
Hard was the strife within the hero's bosom,
Until, with grief subdued, he raised his voice—

XXXVIII

“Go ye,” he said, “and bring my Hjalmar here,
Bring hither Gerda, too, the tender babe;
I must behold them both, my choice between them
I am resolved to make, and one shall die.

XXXIX

“ Know Fialar, seer, know his defiant mind,
And greet the Cloud-gods, ask if e’er they learnt
How to renounce all things, until accustomed
They were, as he, in all things to prevail.

XL

“ Now tramp thy nightly path. But when, one
day,
With spear-point Fialar marks himself for death,
Come, ere his hand rests on the sword benumbèd,
And for thy dark lie thou shalt have thy due.”

XLI

“ King,” answered Dargar, “ not in vain thy word
Has challenged me; right surely I shall come.
The hours of life are reckoned out, and even
For us they fill their tale one day. Farewell.”

XLII

The seer departed calmly on his way.
A maiden brought the children of the king,
Approached the monarch’s throne, and lifted softly
In silence both upon their father’s knees.

XLIII

No more were heard the warriors' merry shouts,
Nor went the foaming horn's delight its round.
Hushed was the hall, as is a crypt, and only
Hushed, awe-struck looks round Fialar showed alive.

XLIV

His choice must be declared. At Hialmar first
He looked, looked long; the night upon his face
Then cleared, and for farewell his eye seemed calmly
To rest upon his daughter now alone.

XLV

She met his gaze, and smiling leaned her cheek
Confidingly against the father's breast;
Again King Fialar shook; the god-defier
Sat trembling now before a helpless child.

XLVI

From her his glance then fled away and fell
On Hialmar, passed away from him and quick
As lightning flew from one babe to the other,
And paused at last, an upward rigid stare.

XLVII

Then Siolf arose. There rolled a glistening tear
Upon his pallid, hoary-bearded cheek.
And drawing nearer to his ancient comrade,
He lifted up in quivering words his voice—

XLVIII

“When, King, thou restest with enfeebled arm,
One day, must Hialmar bear thy sword and guard
Thy land, and wake the memory of Fialar
Afar, where else it might incline to sleep.

XLIX

“Delay no longer then to make thy choice.
Sheer on the fore-shore stands the precipice,
Beneath it waits the chilly wave in silence,
There, like a spark, thy daughter’s life goes out.”

L

Thus he was heard to speak. He took away
The smiling victim from her father’s knee;
The portal opened, and the night enfolded
Soon in her silent gloom the old man’s way.

LI

Where he had sat sat Fialar quiet still;
Only his hand, that lately for support
Was clasped around his daughter, now seemed lying
As struck with palsy on his empty knee.

LII

At length he raised his look. He scanned the hall
Inquiring, fierce, and dark. Men, wont to laugh
At death, appeared to tremble at the lightning
That in the dark night of his eye was born.

LIII

Silence he broke once more. His voice was deep
As din of rolling thunders far away.
“Ye witnesses,” he said, “to Fialar’s sorrow,
The war’s declared; hark to your king’s behest—

LIV

“Woe unto him who hides not in the grave
Of silence things now seen. In shame his life
Shall be enwrapped, and my revenge shall track him
Though storms should hurl him to earth’s farthest
bounds.

LV

“No tongue shall name the name my daughter bore.

Within her father’s bosom, here, she owns
Her life’s short tale; leave me alone its guardian.
As monument to her this must suffice.

LVI

“Then, when, at last, I have attained my goal,
When high the mound o’ervaults my resting-place,
When human voices reach my ear no longer,
Let lips divulge my triumph’s heavy cost.”

LVII

So spake he, and, arising from the throne,
Took by the hand his son, and forth he strode,
As ever stately, from the warriors’ circle,
And left sepulchral silence in the hall.

LVIII

Years came and fled again; King Fialar’s fame
Was carried by report from land to land;
But of the fate that had befallen his daughter
None on the wide earth heard a word, a sound.

SONG II

Whose, then, is she to be, the Maid of Selma,
And who shall cull thee, rosebud of the groves?
Thou, wafting breeze about the banks of rivers,
Whose fate shall be thy fragrance cool to breathe?

I

STATELY the heroes' city Selma mirrors
In Crona's waves her lofty, gleaming towers,
And from the east the sun arisen poureth
O'er Morven's realm a flood of radiant light.

II

Bright is the hall where Fingal throned aforetime,
And yet within it there are wandering now,
In dismal mood, the three sons of Morannal,
The agèd ruler of the land of song.

III

Gall of the Bow betrays a gloomy presence,
And Rurmar of the Harp is wan with grief;
Lately returned from distant fields of battle,
In silence broods defiant Clesamor.

IV

Stealthy their glances each on each are bending,
Threats are enkindled in the princes' looks;
And thunders, in their bosoms deeply hidden,
Await the hour to flash in lightning forth.

V

Why may no gladness thrive within the palace,
Nor concord in the glowing morning's calm?
And wherefore must a brother frown, whenever
His brothers chance to meet his gazing eye?

VI

Such, in the days of Ossian and of Fingal,
Was in the king's hall not the way of life;
The harp resounded only tones of gladness,
The song enchanted, praising deeds of fame.

VII

Strong men they were, the men of by-gone ages;
And like the flames that waste a tottering wood,
Bursting the ranked array of thronging foemen,
They swept on headlong in the hour of fight.

VIII

But when the strangers' insolence was broken,
And when in Selma they were seen once more,
They soon again were of a temper sweeter
Than sunny rays upon a summer day.

IX

Why are the sons of great men so forgetful
Of ways their fathers trod? Why nourish hate
Which, if it swell into a full-blown fury,
May one day break the peace of Morven's realm?

X

Behold, within the burg there blooms a maiden;
Through her has Gall forgot to use his bow;
To her his love-songs Rurmar has devoted;
For her has Clesamor engaged in fight.

XI

Whose, then, is she to be, the Maid of Selma,
And who shall cull thee, rose-bud of the groves?
Thou, wafting breeze about the banks of rivers,
Whose fate shall be thy fragrance cool to breathe?

XII

At last the silence in the hall is broken;
Gall of the Bow, the eldest one in years,
Lifts up his voice in presence of the princes,
And thus, with jealous ire repressed, he speaks—

XIII

“We are the sons of Morven’s king, Morannal,
To him the selfsame mother bore us all;
High from the courses of the clouds in heaven
Great ancestors cast down on us their looks.

XIV

“There gazes Fingal, threatening, from the welkin
To spy, if still an enemy may shrink
From risking an approach unto those highlands
Where he was wont in happy youth to fight.

XV

“What is to be the fate of memory’s Morven,
The country of the loud-resounding strings,
If with a malice poison-fraught its princes
Seek every one to lay his fellow low?

XVI

“Forsooth, but one can win for bride Oihonna,
For wife the sister of the morning sky.
The boundless width of earth is flowered all over
With maidens for the other two to choose.

XVII

“Up, let us go, and meet in peaceful parley
The agèd lord who whiles away his days
Within the tower; the sightless king, our father,
Must now decide our contest once for all.”

XVIII

Unto the old king then their way they wended.
“O father, long has hidden spite been rife
Within thy burg, and malice been instilling
Into our bosoms its insidious breath.

XIX

“Brother has shunned the company of brother,
And followed stealthily his steps aloof.
But now we yearn for reconciliation,
Lest into mourning we should plunge thy realm.

XX

“ We burn, each one, with passion for Oihonna,
Our feud was kindled for her sake alone;
But strife and hope shall be at end together,
If she be given to one of us for bride.

XXI

“ With equal love thou ever hast embraced us;
Howe'er thou choose, by that choice we abide.
Declare on whom thou wilt bestow the maiden
From the wide ocean's azure-distant bound.”

XXII

The agèd king remained awhile in silence,
And weighed his sons' appeal within his soul.
Awhile he seemed distraught with hesitation,
But in the end delivered his reply—

XXIII

“ Free did the Ocean render me Oihonna,
She saw but freedom on the waves' expanse,
And unrestrained she has been left to mirror
Her childhood freely in our tranquil streams.

XXIV

“She, like a breeze, has strayed about the billows,
Like fragrant air around our smiling shores;
And she has been to me a very sunbeam
Amidst the dark night of my waning life.

XXV

“Free must the Breeze be left to wings uplifted,
The Fragrance, in the arms of space to soar,
The Beam, to choose itself the path it follows.
By me Oihonna shall not be compelled.

XXVI

“Gall, with thy bow she is in love, may happen,
Or even, Rurmar of the Songs, with thee;
She has, perchance, set in her heart to follow
Thy ways among the swords, O Clesamor.

XXVII

“Yourselves must venture; such is my decision;
Age gives the first, the last, his proper place.
The favoured, the rejected are forbidden
Thenceforth to harbour spite for evermore.”

XXVIII

There sat by Crona, in the cooling hollow,
The lock-befluttered maiden of the sea.
And there stood Gall, in all his stately presence,
Before the young girl's coyly startled gaze.

XXIX

“Wilt thou, Oihonna, be my life's companion?
The hunter loves thee, rosy-tinted cloud!
The prince of lofty mountain heights entreats thee
To be a sharer in his paths' delights.

XXX

“Saw'st thou the joyful sights of airy regions
High from the mountains in the morning hour?
Saw'st thou the sunbeams ever re-awakened
Imbibe the dew-drops of the quivering mists?

XXXI

“Rememb'rest thou the woodland sounds, when
 breezes
Touch, passing, with their wings the trembling leaves,
When birds are jubilant, and wild with gladness
The brooklet bounds along between the rocks?

XXXII

“Or know'st thou how the heart-beat throbs and
quickens
When, at the mingled cry of horns and hounds,
The bushes crack, and, in his spring arrested,
The stag before our eyes is brought to bay?”

XXXIII

“O maiden, if thou love the dusky evening,
The twinkling lustre of the pallid stars,
Then come with me, and from the top of Mallmor
We'll watch together how the night is born.

XXXIV

“Oh, often have I sat upon the mountain,
When in the west his glittering gate the Sun
Had shut, and slowly had the glow of evening
Faded away upon the sombre cloud;

XXXV

“Have drunk the coolness of the evening's
breathing,
Beheld the shadows straying through the vales,
And round the ocean of the nightly silence
Have left my thoughts at liberty to roam.

XXXVI

“On cloud-high summits life is life of beauty,
And breathing easy in the fragrant wood.
Be thou my plighted troth, and I shall open
Unto thine heart a world of high delight.”

XXXVII

Spake then the chilly maiden of the billows—
“O Gall, I cling to thine alluring realm.
The wind is fresh that blows upon the mountains,
Sweet is the calm within the depths of groves.

XXXVIII

“But more delight me still the songs of minstrels,
And heroes' memories from by-gone days.
Whene'er I listen to the tones of Ossian,
The locks will quiver 'gainst my glowing cheek.

XXXIX

“The hill-side grass hath drunken times a many
Blood of the stag my wingèd dart had caught,
Smitten in the midmost of his wild careering.
Know, Gall, my bow may clang as well as thine.

XL

“Go; on the moors of Morven was my wandering
Most joyous when directed by myself.
When she possesses arrows, bow and quiver,
What more should maiden huntress then desire?”

XLI

With gloom-enclouded brow the youth departed,
And next in turn was Rurmar, prince of song;
Long time his lips refrained from breaking silence,
His eye upon Oihonna fixed its gaze.

XLII

“O maiden,” he was heard at length to utter,
“When I behold thee, vanishes my soul
As aimlessly into thy gazing aspect
As does a mist into the day dispersed.

XLIII

“I own not to a name that memory ever
With pride will keep in store for coming years;
My cheek is pale, my youth is fated early
To wither in the atmosphere of grief.

XLIV

“ Yet love of strength I knew; to me was given
A voice for glorifying deeds of fame.
And when I smote the harp, all Morven listened
In wonder to the tempest of its tones.

XLV

“ But now I'm cold to heroes' valiant fighting,
And fame is radiant in my sight no more;
A fog of dust has gathered round the harp-strings
That my delight it was to touch before.

XLVI

“ 'Tis only by the waves of lonely Crona
That I, outsounded by the torrent's roar,
Attempt, in softly tempered tones, to utter
Unto the night the anguish of my heart.

XLVII

“ But be thou mine, and then my song shall loudly
Ring out as in the joyful days it rang,
Shall be again endowed with wings and carry
The name of Rurmar down the tide of time.

XLVIII

“O maiden, if the voice of memory charm thee,
Then let it say unto the years to come :
Thus was he pleased to sing, the prince of Selma,
When on Oihonna’s glance he fixed his gaze.”

XLIX

“Rurmar,” she spake, the maiden of the ocean,
“The flower stands tender by the water’s edge,
Is bent aside beneath the evening’s breezes
And rocked to slumber by their soft caress.

L

“To such an one sing thou thy heart’s distresses,
Thou minstrel of the sentimental dreams,
Until her eye, as on the evening weareth,
In stillness moistens with the dew of tears.

LI

“’Tis only then the song delights Oihonna
When, with the clang and clash of striking swords,
The harp resounds, and victories come rushing
In stormy riot o’er the minstrel’s lips.

LII

“Her heart could only flame for valiant heroes,
Love glances of defiant courage. Go,
Thou minstrel of the sighs; no consolation
For sorrow such as thine has she to spare.”

LIII

Wrath at her word in Rurmar's eye was kindled,
A ruddy hue o'erspread his pallid cheek;
He turned his face away and from the cavern
In silence soon he quietly withdrew.

LIV

Stepped forward then the haughty prince of battles,
And stormily before the girl he strode—
“Thou hast already spurned both Gall and Rurmar,
Well then, the third in turn is Clesamor.

LV

“He never learnt with words to win his triumphs;
Among the shielded hosts, on bloody fields,
His tongue was silent, and to speak the language
Of death was left unto the sword alone.

LVI

“O maiden, surely thou adorest valour,
Wars ever were thy flaming soul’s delight;
And wars are now awaiting me, so hasten,
For I would first embrace thee as my bride.”

LVII

And at the youthful prince’s words Oihonna
Rose from her seat upon the mossy rock;
She took his hand in hers, into the lustre
Of his inquiring eye she straightly looked.

LVIII

And thus she spake: “To me, of all you brothers,
Thou early wast the foremost, Clesamor,
Thou who, alone among the men of Morven,
Delightest in the gleam of flaming swords.

LIX

“When Selma thou didst leave in search of glory,
For deeds of prowess wrought in foreign lands,
My thoughts would often o’er the ocean wander,
To follow thee upon thy chosen path.

LX

“ Breath of the spirit of thy mighty fathers,
Go whitherso the wars may call thee forth;
Give unto foemen reason still to tremble
Before a scion sprung from Fingal’s race.

LXI

“ Should then a minstrel from afar come hither,
I’ll take my seat within the shield-decked hall,
And at his knees, the while he sings the story,
In silence listen if I hear thy name.

LXII

“ And should it chance that early thou be fated
To reach the drifting sphere of sombre clouds,
Look then adown, and in the land of Morven
One cheek thou shalt discover tear-bedewed.

LXIII

“ Oft from my lonely walks about the moorland
My gaze shall wander towards the evening cloud,
And often shall thy brow serenely vaulted
And raven locks be to my mind recalled.

LXIV

“And yet a bride’s is not the love I give thee,
It is a sister’s only, Clesamor;
We’ve both been fostered by the selfsame father,
The agèd king who dwells in Selma’s tower.”

LXV

“O maiden of the waves,” the prince responded,
“Not to Morannal dost thou owe thy life;
No longer, therefore, name thyself my sister;
Who, thou afar-begotten, saw thy birth?”

LXVI

“Far, far away from Morven didst thou, waking,
Ope thy blue eye to greet the light of day.
'Twas not a woman, but the very ocean,
That gave his daughter to Morannal king.

LXVII

“Perhaps by winds in spring a happy billow
Was lifted up towards the morning sun,
Which, sinking back, gave birth unto thy being
Out of the shimmering light of briny foam.”

LXVIII

Unto the youthful prince's forehead gently
The ocean maiden moved her smiling lips—
“To me, however, thou art but a brother;
How can I ever be a brother's bride?”

LXIX

“From far away shall come my well-beloved one.
Most like a cloud from the horizon's bound,
Or like a stormy blast down from the mountains,
Without a warning thought he will appear.”

SONG III

Oh, I was born to be no blast, no wave,
Though my delight is kindled not as others'.
There beats a maiden's warm and throbbing heart,
Beneath my snow here also, with desire.

I

Who is it hunts the deer in Lora's dale?
From quivering doors of thousand echoes lately
This eventide came back the bugle's sound,
Which, tired, now slumbers on the twilight's bed.

II

Where Crona's dusk-reflecting eddies wind
Round oak-encircled rocks with mosses covered,
Behold the huntress of the swan-white arms,
Oihonna, maiden of the chilly waves.

III

On heathery bed she sits, and gaily pets
The pure-bred, slim brown deerhound, standing
weary
And licking, while the stag is growing cold,
Around the arrow-shaft his gory breast.

IV

But not alone she hunted Crona's banks,
By song-skilled Gylnandyne she was attended.
And wan of look the girl draws slowly near,
But with a smile Oihonna sees her friend.

V

“Hidallan's daughter, come,” she says; “his flight
The trembling guest of hilly tracts has finished.
The night is sweet, more coolly stirs its breath
About my shoulder now the fluttering locks.

VI

“Sing me a song till in the eastern porch
The soft moon shows and lights the moorland path-
ways.
Last time my cold heart's victims were thy theme;
I love not sadness, sing more gaily now.”

VII

And pale-faced Gylnandyne sat down and sang;
The tearful eye was lifted up to heaven.
Within the dim-blue ocean of the sky
There swam a single cloud; she watched its course.

VIII

“ Joy of hoar chief Crualin, where art thou ? ”
Rang out her voice, “ is yonder cloud thy dwelling ?
Step forth then to its silver fringe; look down,
Here breathes Oihonna, thy delight is here.

IX

“ Within thy father’s burg, O Le, of yore
Thine eye met Gylnandyne with brightened glances.
To Morven didst thou track her steps, to be
A guest within the land of tuneful harps.

X

“ About these highlands then thou oft wast seen,
When wide throughout the sunny realms of evening
Sounded thy love’s alluring, merry horn.
Upon Oihonna here thy glances fell.

XI

“ Who sees her, and forgets not all that he
In life had dreamt of as the most delightful ?
I looked at thee, thou saw’st Oihonna alone.
I withered; thou, say, didst thou bloom thyself ?

XII

“ Thy lip grew mute, thy smile died out, thy cheek
Was like a cloud, a fog of tears; thou wand'redest
A bloodless shadow in the brilliant day,
An errant air-waft on the moor by night.

XIII

“ And so one morning cam'st thou back alone,
Stol'st, in unwonted play, from glittering quiver,
Oihonna's open quiver, an arrow keen,
And hidst it in thy bosom deep in blood.

XIV

“ The harp of victory has no note for thee,
And memory's wing unlifteth not thine honour.
Untimely ceased thine arm from deeds of fame.
O Le, 'tis but a girl that sings thy fall!

XV

“ Alack, her tones are not the minstrel's, nor
To them thou, shadow on the clouds, wilt listen!
Alas! her sorrow moves thee not; the grief
Is not Oihonna's, not thy own love's plaint.

XVI

“ Fly, song, like faint air on the moor, that none
Will heed, none answer; take my sigh and hush it
To sleep within the arms of night; in time
I, like the sigh, shall fall asleep, e’en I! ”

XVII

She ceased. And for farewell the flying song
Sent back from hill and dale and wave an echo.
And lonely now ’mong rocks afar there strove
With silence, Crona, but thy muffled roar.

XVIII

Then, in the light of silent, friendly stars,
Oihonna lifted up her beaming glances;
And gently giving Gylnandyne her hand,
Spake thus the maiden of the chilly waves—

XIX

“ ‘ A nipping blast from fell-tops,’ says the song,
‘ Oihonna plays with flowerets of the valley;
She is a wave that glitters in the sun,
Her eye speaks fire, her bosom hides but ice.’ ”

XX

“ Oh, I was born to be no blast, no wave,
Though my delight is kindled not as others’.
There beats a maiden’s warm and throbbing heart
Beneath my snow here also with desire.

XXI

“ But why is found in Morven now no race
Of heroes such as bygone times could boast of?
For Fingal’s kin too heavy is his shield,
A pensive bard stirs feebly Ossian’s strings.

XXII

“ I have already heard enough of sighs,
Cost tears enough the pining sons of Morven;
With their love I was not in love myself,
My grief I gave them, I could do no more.

XXIII

“ When will in storm my thunder-cloud appear?
Youth of my dreams, when wilt thou show, declaring
In din of war, with flash of gleaming sword,
The flame I have enkindled in thy breast?

XXIV

“Hark thou, pale Gylnandyne, and learn for once
What sound in song will take Oihonna’s fancy!
Ask no lament, my tale is fresh, a wind
Blows through it from the mountains of the North.

XXV

“The saga telleth : Far in Lochlin sat,
Lord of a peaceful realm, the monarch Fialar,
Called Lodin’s tempest in his days of youth;
O’er lands and seas he’s unforgotten still.

XXVI

“But agèd he had grown and tired of war,
Drank mead, made laws, and gathered in his tribute.
Disused, his sword could scarcely be unsheathed,
And stripped his galleys lay about the shore.

XXVII

“One day a youth stepped up before the king,
It was his very son, he had none other;
With life’s bright spring within his eye he looked
Upon the agèd lord, and spake and said—

XXVIII

“ ‘ Build me a dragon, father, fit me out!
The paths of thine own youth allure my fancy;
My arm is strong, hot boils my blood. I long
Away out of the sultry dale of home! ’

XXIX

“ The old lord sat in silence. But his son
Grew warmer: ‘ Grant,’ he said, ‘ my prayer, O
father!
I can no longer tarry fameless here
And hear thee, thee alone, in minstrels’ songs.

XXX

“ ‘ Light unto me already is thy shield;
By these hands like a twig thy bow is bended.
The world where thou thy victories hast won
Is open still, with room for Hialmar’s too.’

XXXI

“ And now King Fialar sternly raised his voice—
‘ I swore,’ he said, ‘ that peace should be protected;
My day was stormy; in a world becalmed
Shall joyful beam my life’s declining sun.

XXXII

“ ‘From huts burnt out, from ravaged fields, in
blood
Looks war abroad with front enwrapped in darkness;
I cherish peace; go, youth, consider that!
Behold its face upon my smiling land!’

XXXIII

“ ‘The youth stood still; he held his peace, a tear
Rolled glowing down his flaming cheek; he waited
A while, his lustrous glance then lighted up,
And forth he poured the torrent of his grief—

XXXIV

“ ‘Who gives thee right to sacrifice thy son
Unto Oblivion’s night, to fate of silence?
My life, thy gift, take back; a deedless life
I yield thee, but the boon was worth no more.

XXXV

“ ‘’Tis hard to die forgot, without a name,
But so to live is harder still, O father!
Look not so dark! This life I cannot live;
I can obey, and I obey and die.’

XXXVI

“The old king paused awhile with ire concealed.
An icy calm lay in the words he uttered—
‘The ship thou crav’st I give thee; she has been
Laid up since first I went on Viking cruise.

XXXVII

“‘Her keel is cracked, her bottom grown with
grass,
And through her sides the light of day is streaming.
Up, take her, fly o’er seas and seek thy name
’Mong foreign sounds, for e’er forgot of me.’

XXXVIII

“And Hialmar went, he sought his father’s court,
Where only idle childish play was cared for;
By hands of men, once wont to grip the sword,
Now ball was flung and ball was caught again.

XXXIX

“‘Who’s here, that still loves memories of war?’
So sounded to the warriors’ crowd his challenge.
‘Who joins me for the boundless ocean’s path,
Whereon to play a game with shields and steel?’

XL

“ ‘I have a ship; her bottom’s grown with grass,
And through her sides the light of day is streaming.
But victories are won by men, not keels,
And safest is of ways the conqueror’s way.’

XLI

“ ‘His voice struck like the rumbling thunder-car’s,
When o’er a dull and sultry day it rolleth,
In cloud as black as night, and flashes forth,
And from a leaden languor wakes a world.

XLII

“ ‘A storm had stirred a lightly slumb’ring lake,
That, heaving, rose again in happy billows;
It broke its banks, and wild with doubled force
A joyous flood burst through its prison bars.

XLIII

“ ‘To sea, to war, to victories, abroad!’
Flew now from man to man the cry and shouting.
Soon from their half-sunk craft, on waves defied,
The crew beheld their dwindling native shore.

XLIV

“A message told the king: ‘Thy son fares forth,
And out at sea already looms his dragon;
Thy land’s defenceless, of its fighting men
The best he takes off on a Viking raid.’

XLV

“King Fialar was enraged, his colour changed,
His shield he smote in the resounding chamber—
‘To sea, my men!’ he shouted. ‘Fialar’s law
Is outraged, and the breaker breathing still.’

XLVI

“But Siolf, his mate-in-arms of olden days,
Hoary and bowed with age, spake words of
warning—
‘Stay, King, seek not denied revenge in vain,
And hunt with swallows not the eagles’ brood.’

XLVII

“‘What more? Thou overtakest Hialmar, say,
And triest with withered hand to curb the mighty;
Will he then, in exuberant joy of strength,
Not pay thee back thy feeble deed with scorn?’

XLVIII

“Not one word Fialar uttered in reply.
Down to the strand he marched his weaponed
warriors.
His walk was slow, and on his face lay wrath
Which, erst all fight, was now a stolid calm.

XLIX

“Three days he drifted o’er a trackless plain,
Upon the fourth a galley he discovered;
For Fialar’s dragon straight she shaped her course,
And soon was at her goal with flapping sail.

L

“‘Prepare for fight, King Fialar,’ thundered out
In Biarmish speech the captain. ‘Insolently
Thy son has slain our king, and seized his ship.
Atone his deed, give up thine own, and die!’

LI

“The first ’mong storming warriors, he at once
Swung high his sword up on the royal galley;
The brunt was hard, with equal equal fought,
Yet thinner grew King Fialar’s yielding host.

LII

“ At last around the king stood but a guard
Of faithful men-at-arms from days departed;
And Fialar fought for victory no more,
Fought undismayed for but a glorious fall.

LIII

“ But, lo, unheeded in the heat of fight,
There now shot forth a ship o’er mounted billow;
The stem was gilt, the sail of purple cloth,
And from the top the Gothic wimple streamed.

LIV

“ She cleft her way at steady pace, but swift,
And soon round Fialar, by a troop of happy
And fresh and fiery guests, there was revived
The closing banquet of the bloody swords.

LV

“ It ceased not till the sun sank in the west,
When of the Biarm-host fell the last survivor,
And Fialar gained the day. But dark he stood
With naked steel still brandished in his hand.

LVI

“ ‘Not yet my sword may rest.’ So sounded now
 The voice of agè Fialar, deep and trembling.
 ‘My work’s half done, the boldest of the foes
 I still behold here standing unsubdued.

LVII

“ ‘The Biarm was not mine enemy, not for him
 Did I exchange for th’ ocean’s storms my quiet;
 I went ’gainst him who boldly mocked my will,
 And made a plaything of the oath I swore.

LVIII

“ ‘Come forth, thou man in visored helm, whose
 deed
 I chasten with the scourge of tongue but feebly.
 I mean to speak in different language now,
 That cuts, may be, with yet a keener edge.

LIX

“ ‘Step forth, thy father calls thee out to fight;
 Unsheathe against him now the sword he gave thee;
 Or else come humbled hither, bend thy knee
 And die, with guilt atoned, here at his feet.’

LX

“ He paused. A hum, dull as a sighing wave’s,
Died slowly down among the gathered warriors;
And silent, dread alone and threatening stood
In expectation still the Gothfolk’s king.

LXI

“ Then laid the victor, Hialmar, sword and shield
Upon the ship’s blood-spattered deck in silence,
And stepped unweaponed to his father forth,
And fell on knee obeisant at his feet.

LXII

“ Flashed Fialar’s blade against the evening’s sun,
At Hialmar’s head he aimed the blow, which, falling
With force, rang shrilly on the polished helm;
But ne’er a tremor did the youth betray.

LXIII

“ ‘ My time is passed,’ King Fialar now bewailed;
‘ Not so I dealt the blows in days departed;
Undo thy guard, thine head uncover, son,
My arm’s too weak to split a helmet now! ’

LXIV

“Then meekly Hialmar loosed the helm, and bare
His head he offered to his father’s vengeance;
He stood defenceless, and his only guard
Was frank and smiling calm upon his face.

LXV

“Lo, now he flinched, the ancient man! His
sword,
Raised for a death-blow, fell upon the victim
As faint as though it sought to take its rest
On his luxuriant ringlets’ yellow bed.

LXVI

“From that time forward bold and free the youth
Proceeds from strand to strand o’er foreign waters.
And Fialar sits at home in peaceful land,
And in his softened heart he guards his joy.

LXVII

“Sometimes at night, when fills the royal burg
With crowding guests, and foams the horn in passing
The guild around, and hoary minstrel smites
The string vibrating in the mighty harp,

LXVIII

“ And sings, forgetful of old memories’ praise,
The youth’s new victories alone, and Hialmar,
Hialmar, rings evermore throughout the hall,
And Fialar, proud King Fialar is forgot;

LXIX

“ Then sweeter tastes the mead, and then he lifts,
All youth-revived again, his drooping forehead,
And sends, among the tuneful play, at times,
In beaming looks, unto the bard his thanks.”

LXX

Her song was sung. Dew glittered on the lea,
And from the azure heights the moon looked down-
ward,
With brightened eye, upon that realm of calm
Where, hushed of walk, advanced the summer’s night.

LXXI

Then showed a man approaching o’er the moor,
Who, coming, said: “I’ve sought thy steps,
Oihonna,
From Morven’s king I bring thee word; bestir!
For he expects thee ere to-morrow’s dawn.”

LXXII

“Thou, man of flying words,” the girl replied,
“What moves the aged lord thus to recall me?
Has death then breathed upon his withered limbs?
Say, is he wending to the spirits’ home?”

LXXIII

The comer spake: “I heard the clang of arms
From halls within the burg. The lord o’ the tower
Has three times smitten shield; from lip to lip
The war-cry passes. But I know no more.”

LXXIV

Oihonna rose with brightened face. “Thou, man,
Thy task is done,” she said; “his daughter’s greeting,
Go, take thou back to Morven’s king: she sees
Within his tower how dawns to-morrow’s morn.”

SONG IV

Why tarries longer now the son of Fialar?
Has Innishonna lulled into repose
In the still night of groves his warlike spirit?
Has Hialmar grown forgetful of his word?

I

UPON the strand of Morven day is dawning,
And greyer in the twilight on the crag
Uplifted looms the tower of King Morannal;
In haze beneath the ocean heaves its sighs.

II

But thou appearest not as yet, Oihonna,
Thou, sea-born maiden, say, where dreamest thou?
Arise; Morannal yearns for thy returning,
The agèd lord is pining for his light.

III

He sees not how the night has fled already,
For in his eyes an endless night abides;
No more beholds he how the bridal visage
Of earth appears beneath the morning's kiss.

IV

Still feels he from the windows of his turret
The re-awakened breezes at their play,
And listens to beginning sounds of movement
By waterfowl in lifting wings to flight.

V

And murmuring surf of billows rising higher
He hears, and calls, Oihonna, unto thee—
“Up now, my daughter, make thou speed! Already
Day is at hand; I hear its very voice.”

VI

And then she comes, the maiden of the billows,
The chilly beam on Morven's mountain tracts.
She draweth nearer to the king, still listening—
“Morannal, father, unto thee all hail!

VII

“Upon the heath, beside the stream of Crona,
I chanced to be when last the sun went down;
And even there, with her alluring glances,
The silent Night herself beheld me still.

VIII

“This time Oihonna comes to thee belated;
Deep were thy daughter’s slumbers; wearied she
With hunting. In the realms of dreams, O father,
She lingered on, forgetting thee too long.

IX

“No sun, though, lights up yet Dunhormod’s
summit,
But faintly russet show the mountain firs.
What hath befallen then that thou wouldst bid me
Back to thy presence long before the morn?”

X

In loving-kindliness the agèd monarch
Forth to his daughter reached a withered hand,
And spake to her: “Come unto me, thou glimmer-
Of ray amidst the dark of Selma’s night.

XI

“Come here, and lend the old man in his blindness
But one day more the light of thine own eyes.
His glance will brighten towards the tide of evening,
His darkness flee away as flies a dream.

XII

“ When thou this evening’s cloud beholdest sailing
Pallor-suffused in star-illumined space,
Then, heed my warning, Selma’s lord shall wander
Upon its brim with glance as clear as day.

XIII

“ And shall behold once more his realm appearing
As far, far back he can recall it still,
When from the moon was poured upon its hill-sides
The torrent of her flood of quivering light.

XIV

“ O daughter, war indeed is now upon us!
From Innishonna has been brought the news
That there he came, the Hialmar of the sagas,
But yesterday with Lochlin’s fighting host.

XV

“ From thence himself hath forwarded the greeting,
The youthful eagle of the land of fogs—
“ Arise thou, monarch of illustrious Morven,
And call thy people instantly to arms!

XVI

“ ‘ Out of the North a wind is freshly blowing;
When on the waters dawns to-morrow’s day,
Know, King, a thunder-cloud of sails it carries
Apace against thy tremor-stricken shore.’ ”

XVII

The old man held his peace. A ruddy lustre
Was seen to kindle on the maiden’s cheek.
“ What is the cause, that now Oihonna’s hero,”
She calmly questioned, “ threatens so thy land? ”

XVIII

Then spake again Morannal king: “ A treasure
I own, and unto that he layeth claim.
In minstrels’ tones the fame of it has sounded,
And lured the passion of the youthful prince.

XIX

“ O daughter, learn his words! He hath com-
manded
The message to be sent: ‘ O’er waves I sped
To countries smiling in the sun, and even
Unto the winter’s ice-encumbered homes.

XX

“ But wheresoe'er I came was heard resounding
In song, in saga-lore, thy daughter's name;
Was heard the wailing of rejected lovers,
The pain of weaklings treated with disdain.

XXI

“ Indignant then I made the solemn promise
To take the scornful girl myself for bride.
Give heed to due protection for thy daughter,
For Hialmar's is a wooing by the sword! ’

XXII

“ This is his threat. Would that but now were
dawning
The day that saw me stand on Crona's heath,
When bled to death the army led by Trenmor,
And Erin's realm was all in mourning veiled.

XXIII

“ For then would soon the warrior-lord of Lochlin
Find also in the sandy bed his grave,
As does the billow of the sea, that rusheth
Upon the fore-shore but to perish there.

XXIV

“ Alas! Morannal’s time is fled, and withered
Is now his arm, his light of eye gone out.
His wars are looming pale in their remoteness
As shows the winter’s nightly sheen afar.

XXV

“ Will Morven now come forward in her glory,
Her warriors bleed in merry mood to-day?
Is on thy bow, O Gall, a flash of lightning?
Is death within the spear of Clesamor?

XXVI

“ And thou, the third among my sons, O Rurmar,
Who in the hall of Fingal smit’st the harp,
Art thou endowed with cunning to elicit
Also a tune from helmets with the sword?

XXVII

“ Methinks e’en now I hear a stir tumultuous,
Some sound of clanging steel round Lora’s strand:
Look now without; what seest thou there, my
daughter?
Are Selma’s armies marching out to war? ”

XXVIII

She cast abroad her glance, and in a quiver
Of sweet delight she scanned the brightened space;
Against her face before the morning's mirror
There broke the rosy sheen of sunny day.

XXIX

“I see, O father, how a host is marching
Down from the mountains, nearing leisurely
As any cloud that moves towards the valley,
And hides within it thunderbolts and storm.

XXX

“But calm appears the wide expanse of ocean,
In splendour openeth the Sun his eye;
The deeps are quivering with flaming radiance,
The firmament bursts open to the light.”

XXXI

Upon the agèd monarch's face was dawning
A glimm'ring hint of smiling grief; yet soon
He rose majestic, and anon his spirit
Broke forth and found its vent in glowing words—

XXXII

“All hail,” he said, “thou monarch of the
heavens!

King of the stars, my greeting is to thee,
Thou, Sun, that wanderest for ever youthful
On high above this earth-realm of decay.

XXXIII

“My soul’s delight in times that now are ancient,
My light that hovers in the memory still,
Though by the pall of night my eye is covered,
Though nought abides but darkness in my heart.

XXXIV

“Now may’st thou never in thy pride have reason
To hide thy face indignantly to-day,
At seeing any son of King Morannal
From terror shun to meet a foeman’s spear.

XXXV

“And ye, the children of your father’s vigour,
Gall, prince of hunting sport, and Clesamor,
Thou youth whose mettle many a sword has tested,
And Rurmar, ardent votary of song.

XXXVI

“Go cheerfully along the path of heroes,
And trace the steps that Fingal’s race has trod.
All else with mortals vanishes, eternal
Remains the fame of mighty deeds alone.

XXXVII

“O happy he who not by years is broken,
But falls, while still in youth, ’mong heroes slain,
Like the enchanted thunderbolt that, laughing,
Darts lightning forth, destroys and dieth out.

XXXVIII

“Alas! old age is like a flame that dwindles;
Upon the homestead hearth it flickers faint,
And, burning out, is covered up with ashes,
And then is to forgetfulness consigned.

XXXIX

“Why tarries longer now the son of Fialar?
Has Innishonna lulled into repose
In the still night of groves his warlike spirit?
Is Hialmar grown forgetful of his word?

XL

“What now? I seem to hear the surf of billows,
And whistling sounds of northern gusts of wind,
That fly on wings which seem to grow yet stronger
Each moment as they pass my listening ear.”

XLI

“O father, on the northernmost horizon
Night now ascends the firmament again.
The beam of day is quivering with terror,
And is in flight upon the billows' crests.

XLII

“And gloom is gathering, and enwrapped in
darkness
The sea is far and wide, and steely grey
Stands out Garmalla's pinnacle and shaketh
The hoary foam of surges from its crown.

XLIII

“More white the billows break against the fore-
shore
Already, and a half-burnt fir-tree shows
Upon the steep incline, which reeleth over
Before the growing fury of the storm.

XLIV

“Albeit, not a sail the scene revealeth.
Against the black cloud only, far away,
There breaks, at times, what seems a shooting
glimmer,
A flash reflected by a seagull’s wing.”

XLV

She held her peace. The tempest roared already
With full-grown voice throughout the airy space;
And in the roll of wild resounding billows
Arose the heavy answer of the deep.

XLVI

The clouds themselves were rent by fires asunder,
And through the desert upper heights’ expanse
Outsounding e’en the storm, in muffled rumble
There rolled along the mighty din of heav’n.

XLVII

Then spake again the agèd King of Morven—
“A day like this I once have seen before.
It was the day, upon the stormy ocean,
When, maiden, first I set my eye on thee.

XLVIII

“There was a man called Darg. In songs of
minstrels

His name must not be named. An outlaw's life
He led; proscribed, of home bereft and hated,
On plunder bent, he prowled about the seas.

XLIX

“I gave, indignant, chase unto his galley,
Which dared approach too near to Morven's strand;
A robber, he had not the heart to face me,
As deeds of darkness were his only wont.

L

“Already eve was near, and in the offing
His sail was seen still looming far away;
And all in vain my anger flamed impatient,
When from the clouds there broke a sudden storm.

LI

“By peal on peal of rolling thunder followed,
As at this hour, redoubling instantly;
The wings of my own dragon it uplifted,
And tore the sail of Darg down from the mast.

LII

“But never should the blood of any dastard
Defile my sword. A lightning darted forth
Out of a darkened cloud, and, straightway blazing,
A flame shot up from out the robber’s keel.

LIII

“My craft drew nearer to the burning vessel,
Now all ablaze, though Darg could still be seen.
He stood in gloomy silence at the rudder,
Protected by his shield against the flames.

LIV

“Upon one arm a tender child he carried,
And seemed expectantly to watch my sail.
He looked astern incessantly, betraying
The lingering glance of longing, longing still.

LV

“In his distress I pitied him; and nearer
I stood, until, within an arrow’s shot,
I swung my ship about more into windward,
To keep at safety from the flames myself.

LVI

“ In wild despair the robber flung his buckler
Upon the flaming fire. Headlong he plunged,
And sank there, with the child in his embraces,
Into the billows’ ready yawning grave.

LVII

“ Off flew his galley with the tempest’s swiftness,
But he himself I saw was struggling still
To bear above the waves his tender burden,
While craving for salvation at my hands.

LVIII

“ I kept a heedful eye upon his beckoning,
And took him, wrecked, on board. ’Twas then mine
eye
Looked for the first time upon thee, Oihonna;
’Twas then that I received thee from the sea.

LIX

“ But, tender as thou wast, no harm befell thee
From flames or waves. Thou clungest, weeping, to
The robber’s bosom; and with terror trembling
Thou hidst away thy face against his own.

LX

“Of aspect gloomy, in defiant calmness,
With locks all singed, and raiment half consumed,
Sat, pallid as the clouds' weird apparitions,
Upon my ship's deck the expiring Darg.

LXI

“‘O King,' he said, ‘I now depart contented
To yearned-for rest within Oblivion's arms.
One prayer, however, I desire to utter
For her who grieves, alone on earth, my fall.

LXII

“‘It is not mine, the blood that thou beholdest
Within her cheeks. The guilt of his own life
The outlawed, persecuted evil-doer
Has left for heritage to none on earth.

LXIII

“‘She was, one stormy Yule-eve, given to me
By night-veiled sea, when, in the shelter dread
Of Vidar's headland, I had gone to anchor,
Hard at the foot of Fialar's kingly burg.

LXIV

“ ‘Deal not unkindly with her, thou whose mercy
Will ne'er in song or story be forgot.
Upon this earth she was the only being
That won an hour of happiness from me.’ ”

LXV

Sweet on Oihonna's cheek a tear descended,
Whenas she heard the agèd monarch's tale.
But soon away to sights of novel aspect
Her brightened glances took their flight again.

LXVI

Down by the strand a war-cry sounded loudly;
And with the tempest's roar, the thunder's din,
Mingled the clang of many a shield belaboured,
And echoes of the warriors' merry shouts.

LXVII

He now was seen upon a darkened billow,
He came, the eagle of the land of fogs;
Himself the sea-king, Hialmar of the oceans,
Now swooped upon the hosts of Morven's realm.

LXVIII

And proud upon their native country's foreshore
Stood Selma's warriors in a close array;
A wall of rock defiantly opposing
A wave that heavenward rises to the shock.

LXIX

Then fell the stroke. The hour of battle sounded,
The wave arisen broke against the rock.
Host fell on host, and scattered on the seaboard
Was wide about the spray of surging blood.

LXX

But silent and enchanted stood Oihonna;
The maiden of the ocean now beheld
Her very hero, meeting in the daytime
The light she knew but from her world of dreams.

LXXI

She scanned his movements with her glance
 afaming;
She saw how, with the lightning of his sword,
He through the clouds of Morven's serried legions
Broke for himself a clear and open path.

LXXII

With Lochlin's people was the day already,
Already Selma's host was giving way.
Already she beholds the fray's abatement,
The storm of slaughter settling into calm.

LXXIII

“Thy lip, Oihonna, keeps continued silence.
Oh, answer me.” So spake Morannal now.
“Why grows the clash of swords more rare already?
Is Morven's glory found to be no more?”

LXXIV

Thus questioned he. In trembling gave Oihonna
The answer: “Father, now thou must rejoice.
Anon, anon will Hialmar of the sagas
Be but a bloodless shade upon the clouds.

LXXV

“He's yielding, and his helm is split asunder;
He is beset by all thy sons, O King!
He fights alone; and at the princes' contest
A blank amazement reigneth over all.

LXXVI

“Gall, with his spear aloft, is thrusting boldly;
 Right keenly beams the blade in Rurmar’s hand;
 And, if I see aright, the sword is bloody
 Which by the arm of Clesamor is raised.”

LXXVII

Turned gloomy then the face of Morven’s ruler;
 In wrath he smote the shield he bore in youth;
 He raised his voice, and sternly he commanded
 An instant truce throughout the stricken field.

LXXVIII

“What!” he exclaimed, “must with disgrace be
 covered
 Morannal’s hoary head? Behoves it you,
 My sons, to do an outrage to his honour
 That has defied the shifts of fate and years?”

LXXIX

“And must the song of Fingal’s race be smitten
 With fear, and flee the evening of my life,
 Lest it should taint itself with your dishonour,
 And soil the radiant splendour of its wings?”

LXXX

“And lest in Lochlin’s countrysides the saga,
When telling of the noble Hialmar’s fall,
Should scornfully record how single-handed
In fight with you, all three of you, he fell.

LXXXI

“Up, Gall; thou art, as he, a royal scion.
Thou first-begotten of the brothers, go
And fight thy combat out alone, and perish
If victory, perchance, betrays thy sword.”

LXXXII

And Gall, with shield on outstretched arm
advancing,
Engaged the Lochlin hero all alone;
In sooth, no weakling was the prince of Selma,
Yet soon his life-blood served the dust for drink.

LXXXIII

He waged the battle in his youthful splendour;
He fell with honour from the height of strength,
Like to the wave that rises in the daylight,
And, ray-bemantled, still again subsides.

LXXXIV

Upon the shingle, soaked in blood, stepped forward
Prince Rurmar, born not for the battle fray;
With but the dream and with the harp familiar,
And with the early sorrows of the heart.

LXXXV

His fight was such as is the fight of torches
Against the storms of night. 'Neath Hialmar's blows
He sank, and to all minstrelsy for ever
Thenceforth was cold the bosom of the youth.

LXXXVI

The third was Clesamor himself, the youngest
By tale of years, but seen at early age
In fellowship with fighting-men of Morven
On fields of death by iron over-flashed.

LXXXVII

In furious anger he engaged in battle,
His glances darted forth their flames of threats;
Intent on vengeance for the blood his brothers,
Now pale in death, had shed, he wielded sword.

LXXXVIII

And loudly rang again the steel in striking;
And Morven listened with delight once more
Unto a late, a half-extinguished echo
Of sounds familiar once in Ossian's days.

LXXXIX

Then Hialmar, touched at heart, his hand restrain-
ing
When on the point to deal a deadly blow,
Exclaimed: "O youth, refrain from further fighting;
For saga fame I wish to spare thy life.

XC

"I am delighted with thy morning's splendour;
Thy day shall beam in sunny lustre yet;
Come, reach me now thy hand for frank atonement,
And live for the delight of glorious deeds."

XCI

In scorn replied the warrior prince of Selma
With but a blow dealt flatling by his sword.
Again they fell to fighting, and, extinguished
In blood, the glance of Clesamor was closed.

XCII

Thou, maiden from the billowy ocean's region,
Thy blue eye is bedimmed by flowing tears.
There was laid low, Oihonna, not thy hero.
Why weepeth then the maiden of the waves?

XCIII

In taking by the hand the agèd monarch,
She spake: "O father, mourn; alone and bowed
Thou now art left behind with me and darkness
But to await the conqueror's commands.

XCIV

"Not one of all thy sons remaineth breathing
Upon the rocky shores of Morven's land.
In death they all have followed one another.
Their sleep is now the slumber of the grave."

XCV

She held her peace. And King Morannal's fore-
head
Shone in a brighter aspect once again.
Each cloud of his unrest departed calmly
Out of the faded day upon his face.

XCVI

“Now can Morannal,” said the King of Morven,
“Relieved of every anxious fear, depart,
And frankly meet the spirits of the fathers
Within the azure palace of the stars.

XCVII

“No memories to blush for now attend him,
Nor shall he need to hide in night of clouds
His ghost for any shame his sons committed
When Fingal comes approaching through the skies.

XCVIII

“Make ready unto me a grave, O daughter,
Upon the sandy bed where now at rest
Are Selma’s princes; grant us all together
A common tomb within the land of harps.

XCIX

“Then follow, on his path of high achievements,
The noble stranger, happy, and preserve
The memory of Morannal still, and listen
When minstrels in their songs exalt his praise.”

c

And gently fell his head of hoary whiteness
Upon his shoulder, and his eyelids closed;
And the illumined spirit of the monarch
Flew happy to the mansions of the clouds.

SONG V

Oh, what is man that he should storm against you ?
Like stars in space unreachable you smile
Through clouds of earthly fate which, like a plaything,
One breath of your own will controls at once.

I

FIALAR the king, now grown exceeding aged,
Kept mostly still within his high-roofed hall.
Long days had passed since he had viewed his
country,
Or chanced to breathe the cooling air of lakes.

II

A day befell; the Sun, but lately risen
In splendour from his bath within the waves,
Illumined with his never-aging gladness
The hall again, as in the days of yore.

III

The king this morning-tide was merry-hearted,
And radiant glory shone upon his face.
On memories of stormy days departed
He dwelt among his hoary men-at-arms.

IV

But breaking off his converse of a sudden,
And rising stately from the throne, he said—
“They fly with speed of wings, these hours of vigour,
And days enough for memory we have left.

V

“Come, lead me up unto Mount Telmar’s summit;
I would behold my country once again,
And all the weal my spirit has created,
Before the barrow’s night bedims mine eye.

VI

“Bring me my sword! For one feat yet remaineth
To be performed by my enfeebled arm.
To triumph was my wont, in triumph only
Behoves it that King Fialar’s saga close.”

VII

And, sword-begirt, they led the agèd monarch
Up to Mount Telmar’s summit; and he sat,
And silently he thence beheld his country
Where, clasped by summer, it reposed in peace.

VIII

O'er balmy dales the sun was shining brightly,
And o'er a wide expanse of glassy lakes.
'Twixt hillocks blue meandering waters shimmered,
And harvest waved by harvest on the fields.

IX

And bright and happy Fialar's wide dominion
Lay at his feet, in festal robes arrayed;
And with a face sweet as a grateful daughter's
Looked up towards its hoary-headed sire.

X

And tears bedimmed the eyes of agèd Fialar,
And words of pride he uttered: "I have seen
My work; it is enough; and in fulfilment
Lives here for memory the oath I swore.

XI

"Of desert countrysides my fathers left me
I have created a productive land.
By men of yore these fields were never furrowed,
Nor ever saw these cottages my youth.

XII

“ I now have lived.” The high lord sat in silence.
But forward to him from the warriors’ group
Stepped Siolf, the ancient man, with clouded forehead,
And raised his voice, and uttered words of power—

XIII

“ Thou, King, art old; thy strength of arm is
failing,
And heavily thou leanest unto earth.
Of what thou wast before a shadow only,
Now melting into night, my eye beholds.

XIV

“ If thou wast self-sufficient, why must wither
Thy limbs, then, in the autumn of thine age?
If thou hast made the work thou now beholdest,
Up, then, create thy youth again thyself.

XV

“ Before high Gods, O King, abase thy spirit!
Thy very greatness was a gift from them.
For Frey it was that clothed the field in verdure,
All-Father fenced thy country’s peace alone.

XVI

“’Twas Thor’s the vigour that of yore thou
thoughtest
Was thine, when mighty thou stoodst forth in fight;
What by thyself thou couldst do was: forgotten.
To fall, as falls a tree in trackless wood.”

XVII

So the old man. King Fialar sat and pondered,
And then in calm defiance spake and said—
“I’ve heard of powers that ne’er were seen by
mortals,
In dreamy phantoms I am bid believe.

XVIII

“Unwont am I to put my trust in others,
In my own bosom I have found my stay.
Thus men I swayed, and snatched the very rudder
Of fate from Gods, who threatened me in vain.

XIX

“It may be true that Fialar groweth older,
His shoulder heavier, his locks more white.
Much must needs pass away that was aforetime;
So life will live, such is the course of things.

XX

“One thing remains. The arm, although enfeebled,
I can lift up to victory once more.
My life’s fast fading gaieties and greatness
I can renounce with kingly smile, and die.

XXI

“And die I will. My task is done.” So speaking,
The aged lord uplifted high his head,
Let fall upon the rock his royal mantle,
And to the day lay bare his scarry breast.

XXII

Last, he unsheathed his sword; as erst in battle
The lustre glittered of the speckless blade.
And in his eye a flash was still discovered,
As on the steel a greeting glance he cast.

XXIII

“But where is Dargar now?” the king proceeded,
“He who o’erhears the counsels of the Gods,
Who sees through regions all beyond his vision,
And lives in times that have not dawned as yet?”

XXIV

“ Had he indeed the wisdom he professes,
He now would know the hour, and keep his tryst.
He’s pledged to stand before my sword, ere mightless
Th’ avenger’s lightning rests in withered hand.”

XXV

And at the word was seen a ghostly figure
Approaching slowly through the dale below.
Unto the mountain-heights its way it wended,
Advancing to the top where Fialar sat.

XXVI

The king seemed wonderstruck at recognizing
The hoary wanderer’s features once again.
Without a word his hand and sword together
Sank quietly beside him to the ground.

XXVII

And Dargar stood before the king. “ Commanded
By thee to come, here thou beholdest me!
A long time thou, O King, hast left me waiting;
Since former years thy frailty has increased.

XXVIII

“Hast thou succeeded in thy work’s fulfilment,
 And is the oath thou swore’st still maintained?
 Hast thou laid out for life the path it follows,
 Turned Gods and godly counsels into clouds?”

XXIX

King Fialar laughed. “Amazing things will
 happen
 At times,” he said; “but on what breeze was borne,
 Thou ancient rover, to thine ear my challenge
 The very moment it had passed my lips?”

XXX

“Still, thou hast come, that is enough. An answer
 Unto thy question in return I give:
 I have laid down for life the path it follows,
 And my own counsel, not the Gods’, prevails.

XXXI

“Look round; it is my land thou seest before thee.
 Was it what now it is when I was not?
 I might have sacrificed in war whatever
 Of human kind here now delights in life.

XXXII

“ This realm I could have harried, had I chosen,
And made a waste of it from bound to bound,
So that no wind had found a leaf to rustle,
No butterfly a plant whereon to light.

XXXIII

“ What seest thou now? As far as eye surveyeth
The light of day is shed on furrowed tilth,
And groves now stand where stood but desert forests;
Where beasts of prey had dens stands cot by cot.

XXXIV

“ Broad acres bear the year’s hope, which aforetime
Was whirled by storms about a sea unknown;
And summer-showers and nightly dews are nursing
Our wealth, which grew aforetime out of blood.

XXXV

“ The earth is tamed, and tamed the human spirit,
And worshipped is the berserk’s mood no more.
Where ruled the sword now other powers are ruling;
Where force was victor, victor now is law.

XXXVI

“Chaste manners are esteemed and mercy practised,
 While peaceful work receives its honour due.
 Thus Fialar’s might has put his realm in order.
 Say, shadows’ spokesman, is his oath fulfilled?”

XXXVII

“But more; the threat that from thy Gods thou
 borest
 Has vanished into nothing, e’en as smoke.
 My son enclasps no sister in his bosom;
 Upon my head is weighing no disgrace.”

XXXVIII

“The azure deep conceals my only daughter.
 But over regions of subjected waves,
 His father’s pride, the spotless, song-exalted
 Hialmar from triumph unto triumph speeds.”

XXXIX

“But one more vow still unfulfilled remaineth;
 Yet that shall be fulfilled; my time is short.
 Come nearer, Dargar, and atone thine outrage;
 To expiate thy lie I crave thy blood!”

XL

The agèd seer looked down upon the monarch,
And thus he spake: "The burden of this life
Must one day also lift from me, O Fialar,
And none too soon will come to me my death.

XLI

"I have beheld enough of human fortune,
Experienced enough of grief and joy,
But one hour yet I may endure existence;
That hour I crave, for thine own sake, O King!

XLII

"Delay revenge, till one more witness cometh
Thy final triumph's splendour to enhance.
Delay, till Hialmar comes, his father's honour.
Not long to wait; he is not far away!"

XLIII

Thus spake he, and he held his peace, extending
His calmly lifted arm towards the main.
And Fialar's men broke out in stormy shouting—
"Lo, Gothfolk's drakes with Hialmar heave in
sight!"

XLIV

And Hialmar was in sight. His fleet sped lightly
Along the blue path to the native strand.
Each hour his sails shone nearer and yet nearer,
And foam of waves played glittering at the stems.

XLV

With gladness beamed the looks of hoary warriors
Who stood assembled on the lofty fell.
The agèd monarch's face alone showed gloomy;
And thoughtful, dark and hushed he viewed the ships.

XLVI

When port was gained, and shortened sails already
Were hid from sight beneath the mountain crags,
King Fialar's glances fell again on Dargar,
And, breaking silence, he resumed the word—

XLVII

“Not yet I was prepared to see my Hialmar,
For rumour sang that he was far away.
But let none wonder if a wonder happen
Upon the day I bid farewell to life.

XLVIII

“Thou spak'st of Hialmar. Mark me then, his coming
Shall serve my triumph's splendour to enhance.
With Sun, and Sea, and Earth to bear the witness,
Here shall he stand and judge between us twain.”

XLIX

And at the word came Hialmar. Unattended
He climbed the rugged pathway of the crag;
Not, as aforetime, weapon-decked and beaming,
But with uncovered head, without a shield.

L

The pallor of his face was like the moonshine,
In cloudless winter night, upon the snow.
Weird he appeared as from the grave a spectre,
And in his hand he bore a bloody sword.

LI

“Be welcome, son of mine!” Such was the
greeting
King Fialar uttered in a broken voice.
“Fain had I seen thee with another aspect,
But still, whate'er betides, thou art my joy.

LII

“Tell us the course of all thy deeds of prowess.
In sooth, thou must have borne some heavy brunts.
Hast wounds that drain the fountains of thy vigour?
So quivering shows thy lip and white thy cheek.”

LIII

“O father,” answered Hialmar, “heavy fighting,
Though not with weapons, I have had to bear.
My coat of mail no steel has penetrated,
Yet, deeply wounded, bleeds my heart to death.

LIV

“I ought to hide my count'nance from the
daylight;
For very shame I dare not meet thy gaze;
And yet I yearned to lay my guilt before thee;
Thus life I bore, and thus am breathing still.

LV

“I am undone. And yet a share of greatness
Fell to my lot, though I was young in years.
Ask history, and hark when bards are singing,
And thou wilt understand what Hialmar was.

LVI

“The Northlands’ pride, the ocean’s king they
called me;
I sped about the world as speeds the storm;
I righted wrong, was stay where stay was needed;
Snatched crowns from kings, and crowns again
bestowed.

LVII

“And so I came to Lora’s strand. Morannal
Was ruler of the proud domain of song.
Report spake loudly of his daughter’s beauty;
For her I waged a war with Morven’s hosts.

LVIII

“The agèd king sat blind within his castle,
But all his sons I did to death in fight;
Prize of the victory, I won Oihonna,
And held my bridal on the foaming sea.

LIX

“O, know’st thou what it is to love, my father?
Hast e’er embraced a joy at once as bright
As heaven, and rich and teeming as the earth is,
And, like to both, in endless bloom arrayed?

LX

“What I had been before seemed but a shadow,
The splendour pale, my hope had gazed upon;
All triumphs, won and dreamt of—all was nothing
But emptiness beside the passing hour.

LXI

“The spring-tide breezes bore my galleys onward
Without an aim along an endless path,
And joyous waves on sunlit shoulders lifted
My bliss against the mansions of the Gods.

LXII

“But woe was near at hand. I took the rudder,
One night, and sat behind it sunk in dreams;
None kept the watch, save, by my side, Oihonna;
One lonely star looked on us from on high.

LXIII

“My wedded bride she took my hand: ‘O
Hialmar,
Why art thou ever dearer to my soul?
From early years thou wast Oihonna’s hero;
Ere she beheld thy glances she was thine.

LXIV

“ ‘Why follows not my love its first beginnings?
Because I then had courage to conceal
What unto thee I did not dare discover,
Lest thou shouldst scorn me with indignant pride.

LXV

“ ‘I was so happy then, and more than Hialmar,
As yet, my own delight was unto me.
Morannal I was proud to call my father;
As king-begotten I became thy bride.

LXVI

“ ‘In vain I now should try to hide in silence
What then I was too timid to unfold.
All things I could endure and suffer; only
Thee, O my Hialmar, I can ne'er deceive.

LXVII

“ ‘Put me away, reject me! Know my father
Was not Morannal, not a king, I ween;
The blood that now within my heart is seething
Was once a common thrall's, for aught I know.

LXVIII

“‘Against thy homeland’s shore, close to the
castle

Where thou in kingly splendour wilt reside,
Off Vidar’s Crag, one Yule-night, I was rescued
From storm-tossed billows as an outcast child!’

LXIX

“E’en thus she spake. Nay, blench thou not, my
father;

Her blood upon my sword thou here beholdst!
My ocean bride, Oihonna, Maid of Morven,
Was thine own daughter, was my sister, King!

LXX

“She wished to die, to die for me. I bring thee
Her greeting.” He was silent. But his steel,
Like lightning, hid itself within his bosom,
And on the rock he sank to rest in death.

LXXI

Now hours on hours there glided by; and calmly
The day paced through the measure of its course.
As he had sat, stark as the grey grave pillar,
Voiceless and motionless sat Fialar still.

LXXII

What he was thinking no one knew. But horror
Had frightened all the warriors from his side.
Old Siolf alone, besides the soothsayer Dargar,
Stood near and watched the agony of his soul.

LXXIII

Not till the sun was sinking in the distance
Did he uplift his eyes and look on high.
“Yours is the triumph, ye high Gods,” he uttered;
“I have been punished, I, who tempted you.

LXXIV

“Oh, what is man that he should storm against
you?
Like stars in space unreachable you smile
Through clouds of earthly fate which, like a play-
thing,
One breath of your own will controls at once.

LXXV

“He vaunts: and mighty, proved in many trials,
And wont to triumph, hard as any rock,
He seeks to bend all things as bids his spirit,
And crush whate'er defies his stern behests.

LXXVI

“ His sword is raised. But then, as if in passing,
A hand unseen will gently touch his heart.
His arm he drops, his very glance that lightened
Will change its flashing threats to feeble tears.¹

LXXVII

“ The wide sea swells enraged, the tempest roareth,
But you command: the waves at once subside;
The sea obeys, the fleet-devouring ocean
Is powerless to engulf a helpless child.

LXXVIII

“ I know you now; without humiliation
I bend my knees before your might, at last.
Sated with life, to me has earthly greatness
Become of little worth. To you I go! ”

LXXIX

So spake the king, and with his sword unflinching
Into his scarred breast runes of death he cut.
Rushed from the deep the fountains of his bosom,
And warm with Hialmar's mixed the father's blood.

¹ Cf. Song III, LXIV.

LXXX

Upon the North lay bright the summer evening,
And calm was settled over land and sea.
Beyond the wood the sun concealed his radiance,
And, like the day, KING FIALAR'S life went out.

THE END

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